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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000621

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ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/18/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: MDC SEEKS AU ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE SIGNING
MOU

REF: A) HARARE 607 B) HARARE 605

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Katherine Dhanani for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which would provide a framework for negotiations between ZANU-PF and the MDC, is on hold awaiting talks today in South Africa between South African president Thabo Mbeki and Jean Ping, chairperson of the African Union commission. The MDC hopes that an agreement for AU participation in the mediation process will emerge. Regardless, it appears that the MOU will be signed early next week and negotiations will begin a week later. Given the entrenched positions of the two sides, a favorable outcome to the negotiations appears as of now unlikely. END SUMMARY.

MOU Contents

¶2. (C) Negotiators for ZANU-PF and the two MDC factions have drafted an MOU outlining an agenda for substantive negotiations. The draft MOU has as its goal the creation of "a genuine, viable, permanent and sustainable solution to the Zimbabwe situation...." Substantive areas of discussion include economic, political, security and communication goals, and the framework for a new government. Additionally, the parties agree to take measures to end violence; support the rule of law and its fair application; and ensure the safety of displaced persons and their return home, and the ability of NGOs to render necessary assistance. The MOU "envisages" a time frame of two weeks for negotiations. It is to be signed by President Robert Mugabe, MDC faction leaders Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara, and Mbeki.

¶3. (C) As part of the MOU, the parties agree not to negotiate in the media or to take any decisions on matters

included in the agenda. In practice, this means Mugabe has agreed to defer 33 Senatorial appointments, granted him by the Constitution, and to postpone cabinet appointments and the convening of Parliament.

¶4. (C) According to the MDC, ZANU-PF has undertaken some confidence-building measures contemplated by the MOU. Violence is down--although not eliminated--and some IDPs are returning safely to their villages. Police are no longer seeking to arrest a number of MDC MPs-elect who had been targeted.

An AU Mediator

¶5. (C) The MDC is distrustful of Mbeki and has been pushing for an expanded mediation team. Tsvangirai wrote twice to SADC asking that Mbeki be replaced or that a co-mediator be appointed, and at the AU Summit in Sharm El Sheikh the MDC asked for an AU role. SADC rebuffed Tsvangirai, and the AU Resolution at the end of the Summit called for the parties to negotiate but did not address an AU role.

¶6. (C) Ping is scheduled to meet today in South Africa with Mbeki. According to MDC sources, he has told them he will push for an AU role, but the MDC believes he has told Mbeki that the AU will support him as the sole mediator. (Note: According to news reports, UN assistant secretary general for political affairs Haile Menkarios, who visited Zimbabwe, in

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June, will also meet with Ping and Mbeki. End note.)

¶7. (C) The MOU was completed last week with a goal of signing it on July 16. Tsvangirai decided not to sign in the hope that the Ping-Mbeki meeting would result in an AU role. While there is substantial sentiment within the MDC not to proceed with negotiations absent an AU mediator, MDC secretary general (and negotiator) Tendai Biti told us today he expected Tsvangirai to defer to Ping. In other words, if after the Ping-Mbeki meeting, Ping blesses a sole mediator role for Mbeki, Tsvangirai will sign the MOU. Biti expected the signing to take place at the beginning of the week with negotiations to begin a week later.

Outlook for Negotiations

¶8. (C) ZANU-PF is seeking a government of national unity and is intent on maintaining power, while the MDC favors a transitional government led by the MDC (based on the March 29 election) (Ref B). The MDC's Biti told us both sides were entrenched in their positions and he couldn't see the negotiations succeeding.

¶9. (C) Biti commented that because of his personal hard line position, both sides had talked of replacing him. He thought Tsvangirai was "weak" and was listening to the wrong people, some of whom were tired of the present situation and favored what for him (Biti) would be an unacceptable compromise. He stressed he would fight such a compromise--he "would not give an inch"-- and would not be part of one.

¶10. (C) Biti thought Elton Mangoma was a capable co-negotiator; he was glad to work with him. He was suspicious of Mutambara faction negotiators Welshman Ncube and Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga who he thought, given the weakness of their faction, might be willing to cut a deal with ZANU-PF.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) ZANU-PF realizes Zimbabwe is becoming increasingly ungovernable and that it therefore needs MDC involvement in government and international reengagement. As we concluded Ref B, however, and as confirmed by Biti, it is difficult to see how negotiations can succeed given the respective positions of the parties. We believe the MOU will be signed shortly and that negotiations will begin. But there is no light yet at the end of the tunnel.
Dhanani